

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT PINS ECON CU
SUBJ: MEETING OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PODER POPULAR

1. SUMMARY: NUMEROUS COMPLAINTS ABOUT MUNICIPAL SERVICES BY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PODER POPULAR (CUBAN QUASI-PARLIAMENT) DELEGATES PROMPT FIDEL CASTRO FIRST TO CHALLENGE RESPONSIBLE MINISTER AND THEN TO EXHORT DELEGATES ON NEED TO SACRIFICE CURRENT GOODS AND SERVICES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT. RISING CRIME AMONG UNEMPLOYED YOUTH AND MOUNTING TRAFFIC DEATHS AND INJURIES BRING FORTH REVEALING EXCHANGE BETWEEN CASTRO, POLICE, AND LABOR AUTHORITIES. END SUMARY.

2. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PODER POPULAR HELD ITS SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING IN CARLOS MARX THEATER, HAVANA, JUNE 28-30. DIPLOMATIC CORPS FOR FIRST TIME WAS INVITED TO ALL SESSIONS. THIS, INTER ALIA, PERMITTED OBSERVATION OF PERSONAL RELATIONS AMONG MEMBERS OF ELITE COUNCIL OF STATE WHO FACED DELEGATES FROM STAGE. (WE OBSERVED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT FIDEL CASTRO SHARES HIS BRIEFING MATERIALS AND HOLDS CONSTANT DISCUSSIONS WITH BROTHER RAUL. LATTER TALKS FREQUENTLY WITH CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL SENEN CASAS AND SECRETARY OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
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OSMANY CIENFUEGOS. GENERAL ABELARDO COLOME, REPORTEDLY CHIEF OF CUBAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA, RARELY SPEAKS WITH RAUL OR CELIA SANCHEZ WHO SAT NEXT TO HIM. POLITBURO MEMBERS, OTHER THAN CASTRO BROTHERS, HARDLY TALK TO ONE ANOTHER. OLD COMMUNIST BLAS ROCA PLAYS ROLE OF "DEFENDER OF PEOPLE" AND SUCCESSFULLY REASONED WITH FIDEL ON ON OCCASION. PLANNING CHIEF HUMBERTO PEREZ, SPEAKING AS

DELEGATE, WAS VIRTUALLY ALONE IN HIS SLAVISH INVOCATION OF SOVIET EXPERIENCE.)

3. SESSION WAS COMPLETELY DOMINATED BY FIDEL CASTRO WHO INTERROGATED SPEAKERS, MADE EXTENDED PEDANTIC REMARKS, AND ULTIMATELY CRITICIZED DELEGATES. VOTES WERE ALMOST ALWAYS UNANIMOUS (WITH ONE MAJOR EMBARRASSING EXCEPTION WHEN ABOUT THIRTY DELEGATES QUICKLY RAISED THEIR HANDS TO APPROVE A MINOR AMENDMENT, BEFORE NOTICING THAT CASTRO HAD NOT RAISED HIS HAND), BUT DELEGATES, AFTER PROMPTING BY CASTRO, WERE AMAZINGLY AGGRESSIVE IN VOICING THEIR COMPLAINTS ABOUT LOCAL SERVICES (LEAKING PIPES, CLOGGED PLUMBING, INSUFFICIENT ELECTRICAL SERVICE, UNSATISFACTORY ELECTRICITY BILLING). VOICED COMPLAINTS WERE OF SUCH A VOLUME THAT CASTRO FELT MOVED, FIRST, TO CALL FORWARD, QUESTION, AND CRITICIZE MINISTER OF ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY AND THEN TO TURN ON DELEGATES THEMSELVES.

4. IN SEEMINGLY SPONTANEOUS FORTH MINUTE INTERVENTION, JUNE 30, CASTRO SAID THAT, INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, DELEGATES SHOULD BE SOLVING THEIR OWN PROBLEMS IN THEIR LOCAL AREAS. (EARLIER, HOWEVER, WHEN ONE DELEGATE RECOUNTED HOW SHE HERSELF REPLACED STREET LIGHT BULB AFTER FAILING FOR MONTHS TO GET RESPONSE FROM ELECTRICITY ENTERPRISE, CASTRO DEMANDED TO KNOW WHERE LIGHT BULB CAME FROM.) CASTRO STATED, HOWEVER, THAT, DESPITE EFFORTS OF DELEGATES, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BASIC HARD REALITY IS THAT UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRY MAKES SATISFACTION OF ALL OF PEOPLES' DESIRES IMPOSSIBLE. (CASTRO RECALLED THREE YEARS OF POVERTY IN HIS CHILDHOOD IN WHICH HE DID NOT RECEIVE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS HE WANTED. HE RECEIVED TOY CORNETS INSTEAD OF A LOCOMOTIVE. "THIS IS LIFE," HE SAID.)

5. CASTRO CONTINUED THAT DELEGATES MUST WORK TO GIVE POPULACE EDUCATION ON ECONOMIC SITUATION OF COUNTRY (TO CREATE "ECONOMIC CULTURE" IN ADDITION TO ALREADY EXISTING "POLITICAL CULTURE"). HE ALLOWED THAT CUBAN REVOLUTIONARIES HAD MADE MISTAKE IN SEEKING TO CONSTRUCT FULL COMMUNISM (TOTAL PLENTY) BEFORE CONSTRUCTING SOCIALIST BASE OF PRODUCTION. NOW, HE SAID, CUBAN LEADERSHIP REALIZES THAT INDUSTRIAL BASE MUST BE CREATED TO OVERCOME FUNDAMENTAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND THAT PLANNING MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ECONOMIC PRIORITY OF INVESTMENT FOR PRODUCTIVE ECONOMIC PURPOSES OVER PUBLIC CONSUMPTION AND SERVICES.

6. CASTRO, PRESUMABLY TAKING INTO ACCOUNT WIDESPREAD POPULAR DESIRE TO RESUME TRADE WITH US, SAID THAT PROBLEMS FOR POPULACE WOULD REMAIN WITH OR WITHOUT "BLOCKADE" (US EMBARGO). HE SAID THAT IF IMPERIALISTS LIFT "BLOCKADE" TOMORROW THERE WILL STILL BE MANY DIFFICULTIES TWENTY YEARS

FROM NOW. CASTRO THEN ALLOWED THAT CUBA IS NOT ONLY PLANNING FOR 1981-85 FIVE YEAR PLAN PERIOD, BUT ALSO FOR PERIOD UP TO YEAR 2000. HE SAID THAT, EVEN THOUGH MORE HOUSING AND OTHER SOCIAL INVESTMENTS WOULD BE MADE EACH YEAR, HOUSING PROBLEM WOULD NOT BE COMPLETELY SOLVED EVEN BY YEAR 2000. BASIC PROBLEM AND NEED, HE SAID, IS TO INCREASE TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF INVESTMENT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN EACH ENSUING FIVE YEAR PLAN. CASTRO REVEALED THAT, AS COMPARED TO SEVEN BILLION PESO INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT IN CURRENT 1976-80 FIVE YEAR PLAN, CUBANS WOULD SEEK TO INVEST TWENTY-ONE BILLION PESOS IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN 1981-85 FIVE YEAR PLAN.

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7. GIVEN THIS EXPANDING INVESTMENT IN INDUSTRY AND NEED TO LIMIT NON-ESSENTIAL IMPORTS, CASTRO SAID THAT NEXT TWENTY TO TWENTY-FIVE YEARS WOULD PRESENT "EXTRAORDINARY CHALLENGE" TO CUBAN PEOPLE. TURNING EMOTIONAL, HE THEN STATED THAT CUBANS ARE PLANNING ON EXISTENCE OF "BLOCKADE" TO YEAR 2000 AND THAT THEY (THE CUBANS) "LAUGH AT BLOCKADE". CASTRO'S BY-THEN FEVERISH RANT RECEIVED STANDING OVATION. (COMMENT: MAJOR IMPORTANCE OF CASTRO'S STATEMENT IS THAT HE EXTENDED PERIOD OF ANTICIPATED HARDSHIP FOR CUBAN PUBLIC BEYOND SEVEN-EIGHT YEAR PERIOD CITED IN HIS DECEMBER PODER POPULAR SPEECH UP TO YEAR 2000. WHILE HIS REMARKS ARE PRESUMABLY MEANT IN PART TO SIGNAL DEFIANCE OF BARTLEET AMENDMENT, THEY ALSO REFLECT CASTRO'S SINGLE-MINDED COMMITMENT TO TRANSFORM CUBA REGARDLESS OF COSTS TO POPULACE.)

8. IN ADDITION TO ECONOMIC DIMENSION, OTHER INTRIGUING

SOCIAL PHENOMENA CAME TO LIGHT DURING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION. BRIGADIER GENERAL ENIO LEYVA, VICE-MINISTER OF INTERIOR, REPORTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT DURING SIX MONTHS PERIOD BETWEEN NOVEMBER 1977 AND APRIL 1978 STATE SECURITY DEPARTMENT OF SUPREME COURT HEARD 79 CASES. DURING SAME SIX MONTH PERIOD, STATE SECURITY DEPARTMENTS OF PROVINCIAL COURTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HEAR 817 CASES OF WHICH 54 PERCENT WERE "CARRIED FORWARD". (COMMENT: WE PRESUME LATTER PHRASE REFERS TO CONVICTIONS. STATE SECURITY CRIMES HERE INCLUDE NOT ONLY POLITICAL OFFENSES, BUT ALSO "ECONOMIC SABOTAGE" AND OTHER SERIOUS ECONOMIC MIS-CONDUCT. FYI THESE FIGURES WERE DELETED FROM CUBAN PRESS SUMMARY OF LEYVA'S REMARKS. END FYI.)

9. LEYVA ALSO INDICATED THAT CRIME AMONG YOUTH "UNCONNECTED WITH WORK CENTERS" (I.E., UNEMPLOYED) HAS BEEN ON THE RISE. IN LAST SIX MONTHS, LEYVA SAID, 46.7 PERCENT OF TOTAL ROBBERIES AND BULGARIES HAVE BEEN COMMITTED BY PEOPLE 16 TO 25 YEARS OLD AND 10 PERCENT BY YOUTHS AGED 12 TO 16. COMMENT: ALL PEOPLE IN CUBA UNDER AGE 25 HAVE RECEIVED THEIR EDUCATION UNDER CASTRO REGIME.) LEYVA, UNDER QUESTIONING BY CASTRO SAID THAT MINISTRY OF INTERIOR USES TERM "UNCONNECTED" (DESVINCULADO) FROM WORK, BECAUSE UNEMPLOYMENT (DESEMPLEO) DOES NOT EXIST IN CUBA. THESE PEOPLE HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK, LEYVA, SAID, BUT THEY DO NOT WISH TO DO SO.

10. LEYVA'S REMARKS WERE CLARIFIED FROM FLOOR BY CHAIRMAN OF STATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY OSCAR FERNANDEZ PADILLA WHO SAID THAT CUBA HAS AN EIGHTY THOUSAND PERSON "LABOR RESERVE" ("RESERVA LOBORAL" - THAT IS, EIGHTY THOUSAND PEOPLE - 3.2 PERCENT - OF A LABOR FORCE OF ABOUT 2.5 MILLION PEOPLE ARE THUS ACKNOWLEDGED AS BEING, IN EFFECT, UNEMPLOYED.) THE PLAN FOR NEXT YEAR LOOKS FOR CREATION OF 120 THOUSAND NEW JOBS, FERNANDEZ PADILLA SAID, BUT SOME 15 THOUSAND OF THE EIGHTY THOUSAND "LABOR RESERVE" ARE EX-PRISONERS WHO NO ONE WANTS TO HIRE. FERNANDEZ PADILLA ADDED THAT THE PROBLEM OF THOSE AMONG THIS GROUP WHO DO NOT WISH TO WORK COULD BE HANDLED BY APPLICATION OF THE LAW AGAINST VAGRANCY WHICH IS STILL VALID, BUT HAS NOT BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ENFORCED SINCE 1971 TO 1973. THIS PRESENTS CERTAIN (UNSPECIFIED) PROBLEMS, HOWEVER, FERNANDEZ PADILLA SAID.

11. WITH REGARD TO ANOTHER DISTURBING PROBLEM IN CUBA, LEYVA INDICATED THAT DURING LAST SIX MONTHS 606 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN KILLED AND 8,708 INJURED IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS (COMMENT: THIS SERVES TO INDICATE HOW MINIMAL PROBABLE CUBAN LOSSES ARE IN AFRICA IN COMPARISON TO THESE EVERYDAY TRAGEDIES.) AFTER LEYVA INDICATED THAT ONLY 388 PEOPLE ARE NOW IN PRISON FOR TRAFFIC OFFENSES AND THAT ONLY 30 PERCENT OF PEOPLE PAY FINES IMPOSED BY POLICE, CASTRO ANGRILY CALLED FOR MORE PRISONERS AND HIGHER FINES. BLAS ROCA THEN ROSE FROM HIS SEAT AND REASONED WITH CASTRO APPARENTLY SUCCESSFULLY. ROCA ANNOUNCED SUBSEQUENTLY THAT A NEW DECREE-LAW WOULD BE ISSUED WHICH WOULD NOT RAISE FINES OR PUNISHMENT, WHICH ARE ALREADY HIGH ENOUGH, BUT WOULD MAKE THESE SANCTIONS "IMPLACABLE". ANYONE NOT PAYING FINES WOULD BE DETAINED BY POLICE. (COMMENT: CURRENTLY MOST CUBAN TRAFFIC VIOLATORS DO NOT PAY FINES, IGNORE COURT SUMMONS, AND WAIT UNTIL SIX MONTHS STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS RUNS OUT.)

12. COMMENT: PODER POPULAR SESSION PROVIDED SOME EXTRA-ORDINARILY REVEALING INSIGHTS INTO PROBLEMS CURRENTLY FACING CUBA-MANY OF WHICH IMPACT ON CUBA'S POLICY TOWARD AFRICA AND VIS-A-VIS THE UNITED STATES. IN SHORT, OUR CONCLUSIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS: (A) CUBA IS PROCEEDING WITH IT EFFORTS TO INDUSTRIALIZE WHICH WILL INCREASE INCENTIVES TO GAIN ACCESS TO BROADER SOURCES OF SUPPLY AND MARKETS - INCLUDING US, (B) THE CUBAN POPULACE IS OFFERED LITTLE HOPE FOR BETTER CONSUMPTION OR SERVICES - A FACTOR WHICH WILL MAINTAIN POPULAR PREDISPOSITION, IF NOT PRESSURE, TO BEGIN TRADE WITH US, (C) BUT CONTINUED EVIDENCE OF SOCIAL ALIENATION ENCOURAGES REGIME TO MAINTAIN SENSE OF REVOLUTIONARY MOBILIZATION THROUGH MECHANISMS SUCH AS AFRICAN ADVENTURES. GLASSMAN

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